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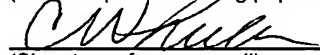
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A P P L I C A T I O N

Of

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For

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PORTABLE ORGANIZER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 The invention relates generally to luggage. More particularly, the invention relates to luggage containing compartments for organizing the contents within the luggage.

10 There is a great need for luggage that allows a user to transport a variety of objects and materials. Over the years, many types of wheeled luggage have been used to aid a user in rolling luggage over a surface without the need to lift and carry that heavy piece of luggage. It is well-known for such pieces of wheeled luggage to include a handle that extends and retracts in order to allow the user to control the direction the luggage is rolling in.

15 Many different types of luggage have been employed to carry objects or materials. However, such luggage is usually more concerned with maximizing the amount of empty space within the luggage available for use by the user than anything else. For example, U.S. Patent No. 6,575,272 discloses an expandible luggage with locking expansion mechanism.
20 However, this piece of luggage merely expands the dimensions of the body of the luggage in order to create more room for objects, clothing, etc. to be placed within. In another example, U.S. Patent No. 6,609,598 discloses a luggage piece having a sector-like expandable section. However, this piece of luggage also merely increases the space within the luggage for receiving
25 objects, clothing, etc.

 While luggage such as those described above may provide means of increasing the interior volume of the luggage, such luggage can always be improved.

30 Accordingly, there is a need for luggage which allows a user to organize the contents within. There is also a need for luggage which provides the user with easy access to the contents within. There is a further need for luggage that provides expandible access to the contents therein.

There is an additional need for luggage that provides expandible/collapsible storage therein. The present invention satisfies these needs and provides other related advantages.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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The present invention provides luggage which allows a user to organize the contents within. The present invention also provides the user with easy access to the contents within. The present invention additionally provides expandible access to the contents therein. The present invention further provides expandible/collapsible storage.

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An embodiment of the present invention, in the form of a portable organizer, includes a body defining an interior compartment. The organizer also includes a plurality of trays for holding objects. The trays are disposed within the compartment and movable between a collapsed configuration where all the trays are located within the compartment and an expanded configuration where a number of the plurality of trays extend outwardly from the body. The trays are aligned and operationally connected to each other.

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The organizer further includes means for locking the trays in the expanded configuration connected to the body. The locking means include at least one telescopically expandable support.

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The organizer includes at least one pocket connected to an exterior of the body.

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The trays of the organizer are stacked one atop the other in the collapsed configuration. The trays are connected to an interior framework that is located generally within the compartment and connected to a bottom side of the compartment. The interior framework includes two collapsible sidewalls where the trays are connected to each of the sidewalls. Each tray is connected to a particular location on one of the sidewalls and to a corresponding location on the other of the sidewalls. The interior framework includes means for locking the trays in the expanded configuration. The locking means include at least one telescopically expandable support.

The body of the organizer includes a bottom side, a top side, two sidewalls, a front side, and a back side. The top side pivots along an intersection of the top side and back side and the front side pivots along an intersection of the front side and bottom side.

5 A pair of supports connect the front side and sidewalls. Each support includes a first portion connected to one of the side walls and a second portion connected to the front side. The first portion and second portion are connected by a fastening means which may come in various forms, including, but not limited to, hook and loop fasteners.

10 Each sidewall of the body includes a pocket. Each sidewall may also include a handle. The top side of the body also includes a handle.

The organizer includes means for fastening the top side and the sidewalls. The organizer also includes means for fastening the front side and the sidewalls. The organizer further includes means for fastening the top
15 side and front side.

The organizer includes a pair of wheels operationally connected to the body. The organizer additionally includes a handle connected to the body and extendable between a retracted position and an extended position. The wheels and handle may each be connected to an exterior framework that
20 is itself connected to the body.

Other features and advantages of the invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

25 The accompanying drawings illustrate the invention. In such drawings:

30 FIGURES 1 and 2 are orthogonal views illustrating a piece of luggage embodying the present invention showing, respectively, a handle extended and the handle retracted;

FIGURES 3 and 4 are front and rear views of the luggage of FIG. 1;

FIGURES 5 and 6 are side views of the luggage of FIG. 1;

FIGURES 7 and 8 are top and bottom plan views of the luggage of FIG. 1;

FIGURE 9 is an orthogonal view of the luggage of FIG. 1 with the luggage in an open configuration;

FIGURE 10 is an orthogonal view of the luggage of FIG. 9 with the trays extended;

FIGURES 11 and 12 are front and rear views of the luggage of FIG. 10;

FIGURE 13 is a side elevational view of the luggage of FIG. 10;

FIGURES 14 and 15 are side elevational views of the trays of FIG. 13 embodying the present invention in, respectively, extended and retracted configurations; and

FIGURE 16 is a front view of the trays of FIG. 14;

FIGURE 17 is a front view of the trays in an intermediate extended position; and

FIGURE 18 is a front elevation view of the trays of FIG. 15.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is useful in allowing a user to organize the contents within a piece of luggage embodying the present invention. The present invention is also useful in providing a user with easy access to the contents within a piece of luggage embodying the present invention. The present invention is further useful in providing expandible access to the contents within a piece of luggage embodying the present invention. The present invention is additionally useful in providing expandible/collapsible storage within a piece of luggage embodying the present invention.

As shown in the drawings for purposes of illustration, an embodiment of the present invention resides in a portable organizer 20. As

illustrated in FIGS. 1-18, the organizer 20 includes a generally cube-shaped body 22 defining an interior compartment 24. Alternatively, the shape of the body 22 can be any three-dimensional shape including, without limitation, cylindrical, rectangular, or the like. The organizer 20 also includes a plurality of trays 26 for holding objects such as construction paper, printer paper, tools, jewelry, personal documents, embellishments, ribbons, any object that can be stored or the like. Nine trays 26 are shown in the figures for purposes of illustration. The trays 26 are disposed within the compartment 24 and movable between a collapsed configuration where all the trays 26 are located within the compartment 24 and an expanded configuration where a number of the plurality of trays 26 extend outwardly from the body 22. The trays 26 are aligned and operationally connected to each other.

The body 22 of the organizer 20 includes a top side 28, a bottom side 30, a first sidewall 32, a second sidewall 34 opposite the first sidewall 32, a front side 36, and a back side 38 opposite the front side 36. The top side 28 is connected to the back side 38. The top side 28 pivots along an intersection 40 of the top side 28 and the back side 38. In a similar manner, the front side 36 pivots along an intersection 42 of the front side 36 and bottom side 30. The body 22 can be reinforced by connecting a number of L-shaped brackets (not shown) along the intersections of the front side 36 and the sidewalls 32, 34 as well as connecting a number of the L-shaped brackets along the intersections of the back side 38 and the sidewalls 32, 34.

The body 22 includes at least one pocket 44 connected to an exterior of the body 22. Preferably, each sidewall 32, 34 of the body 22 includes a pocket 44 which extends outwardly from the sidewall 32, 34. The pockets 44 may be various shapes including, without limitation rectangular, trapezoidal, semi-circular or the like. Each pocket 44 may be open or include a closure 45 in the form of a zipper. Each sidewall 32, 34 also includes a handle 46 to assist a user in lifting the organizer 20. The ends of the handles 46 may be sewn or otherwise permanently attached to the sidewalls 32, 34. The top side 28 of the body 22 also includes a handle 48. The ends of the handle 48 may be sewn or otherwise permanently attached to the top side

28. Mating fasteners 50, in the form of hook and loop fasteners, snaps, buttons or the like, are used to removably connect the middle portion of the handle 48 on the top side 28 to the surface of the top side 28.

5 The body 22 includes a means 52 for fastening the each side of the top side 28 to one of the sidewalls 32, 34. The fastening means 52 is in the form of a closure that comes in various forms including, but not limited to, a zipper. One closure 52 runs along the length the top side 28 where the top side 28 meets the first sidewall 32 and another closure runs the length of the top side 28 where the top side 28 meets the second sidewall 34. When each
10 closure 52 is open, the top side 28 can pivot along an intersection 40 where the top side 28 meets the back side 38.

The body 22 also includes a means 54 for fastening the each side of the front side 36 to one of the sidewalls 32, 34. The fastening means 54 is in the form of a closure that comes in various forms including, but not
15 limited to, a zipper. One closure 54 runs along the length the front side 36 where the front side 36 meets the first sidewall 32 and another closure runs the length of the front side 36 where the front side 36 meets the second sidewall 34. When each closure 52 is open, the front side 36 can pivot along an intersection 42 where the front side 36 meets the bottom side 30.

20 A pair of rectangularly-shaped supports 56 connect the front side 36 and the sidewalls 32, 34. Each support 56 includes a first portion 58 connected to one of the sidewalls 32, 34 and a second portion 60 connected to the front side 36. Each portion 58, 60 is rectangularly-shaped. The first portion 58 and the second portion 60 are connected to each other by a
25 fastening means 62 which may come in various forms, including, but not limited to, hook and loop fasteners, snaps, buttons and button holes, etc. The fastening means 62 may be positioned at several points along the lengths of the first and second portions 58, 60 in order to allow the combined length of the two portions 58, 60 to be adjustable. This allows the front side
30 36 to be held at a relative angle α of between zero and ninety degrees with respect to the body 22. To this end, one end of each portion 58, 60 is attached at an angle to its respective side 32, 34, 36. The ends of the

portions 58, 60 may be sewn or otherwise permanently attached to its respective side 32, 34, 36. In the alternative, the ends of the portions 58, 60 may be removably connected to its respective side 32, 34, 36 by hook and loop fasteners, snaps, buttons or the like.

5 The top side 28 includes a flap 64 which extends over and partially covers the front side 36. The flap 64 includes a means 66 for fastening the top side 28 and the front side 36. The fastening means 66 which may come in various forms, including, but not limited to, hook and loop fasteners, snaps, buttons and button holes, etc.

10 The trays 26 of the organizer 20 are stacked one atop the other in the collapsed configuration. The trays 26 are connected to an interior framework 68 that is located generally within the interior compartment 24 and connected to the bottom side 30 and sidewalls 32, 34 of the body 22. The interior framework 68 includes two collapsible sidewalls 70 where the trays
15 26 are connected to each of the sidewalls 70. Each tray 26 is connected to a particular location on one of the sidewalls 70 and to a corresponding location on the other of the sidewalls 70. The collapsible sidewalls 70 are constructed of a fiber cloth material which may be constructed from various materials including, without limitation, natural fibers, artificial fibers (e.g.,
20 NYLON), plastic, leather or the like. Each sidewall 70 includes a plurality of individual rectangular portions 72 where most, if not all, of the rectangular portions 72 have a hollow interior (not shown) filled with a flat internal sheet (not shown) that may be made from various materials including, without limitation, plastic, plywood, metal, wood or the like in order to reinforce the rectangular portions 72 such that the sidewalls 70 fold/unfold in a consistent
25 manner as the trays 26 move between the collapsed and expanded configurations. The trays 26 may be connected to the sidewalls 70 by various fastening means 74 including, without limitation, rivets, nuts and bolts, screws or the like. Each sidewall 70 is a single piece separated into
30 the rectangular portions 72 by stitching 76 which holds the flat internal sheets in position. The rectangular portions 72 to which the trays 26 are connected are slimmer than the remaining rectangular portions 72.

The interior framework 68 also includes a collapsible back wall 78, similar in construction and appearance to the sidewalls 70, connected to each tray 26 at a particular location. Each tray 26 should be connected to the sidewalls 70 and back wall 78 at the same position along the walls 70, 78 such that each tray 26 is generally horizontal when the trays 26 are in the expanded and collapsed configurations. The collapsible back wall 78 is constructed in the same manner as the sidewalls 70 with a fiber cloth material which may be constructed from various materials including, without limitation, natural fibers, artificial fibers (e.g., NYLON), plastic, leather or the like. The back wall 78 includes a plurality of individual rectangular portions 80 where most, if not all, of the rectangular portions 80 have a hollow interior (not shown) filled with a flat internal sheet (not shown) that may be made from various materials including, without limitation, plastic, plywood, metal, wood or the like in order to reinforce the rectangular portions 80 such that the back walls 78 folds/unfolds in a consistent manner as the trays 26 move between the collapsed and expanded configurations. The trays 26 may be connected to the back wall 78 by various fastening means 82 including, without limitation, rivets, nuts and bolts, screws or the like. The back wall 78 is a single piece separated into the rectangular portions 80 by stitching 84 which holds the flat internal sheets in position. The rectangular portions 80 to which the trays 26 are connected are slimmer than the remaining rectangular portions 80.

The interior framework 68 includes a top portion 86. The top portion 86 is shaped and sized so as to fit within the compartment 24 when the trays 26 are in the collapsed configuration. One end of the sidewalls 70 and back wall 78 is connected to the bottom side 30 while the other end of the sidewalls 70 and back wall 78 is connected to the top portion 86. In the expanded configuration, the trays 26 are spaced apart and suspended between the collapsible walls 70, 78.

The interior framework 68 includes a means 88 for locking the trays 26 in the expanded configuration. The locking means 88 includes two telescopically expandable supports 90. Each support 90 includes two

brackets 92 which connect the support 90 to one of the sidewalls 32, 34 at two locations along the length of the particular sidewall 32, 34. The top end of each support 90 is connected to the top portion 86.

5 The top portion 86 also includes two handles 94, each handle 94 located near or at the location where one of the supports 90 connects to the top portion 86. The handles 94 assist a user in lifting the trays 26 to the expanded configuration. The ends of the handles 94 may be sewn or otherwise permanently attached to the top portion 86. The top portion 86 also includes two locking mechanism release buttons 96, each button 96
10 assigned to and located above one of the supports 90.

Each support 90 is telescopically expandable between the collapsed and expanded configurations and automatically lock into position in the expanded configuration. When the supports 90 are locked in the expanded configuration, depressing the release button 96 at the top of the
15 support 90 frees the support 90 to telescopically move towards the collapsed position. The supports 90 also lock into position in an intermediate configuration between the expanded and collapsed configurations. As the supports 90 move from the expanded configuration towards the collapsed configuration, the supports 90 automatically lock into the intermediate
20 configuration unless the user maintains the release button 96 in a depressed position, allowing the supports 90 to continue to telescopically retract towards the collapsed configuration.

An exterior, generally L-shaped framework 98 is connected to the bottom side 30 and back side 38 of the body 22. The exterior framework 98
25 includes a pair of wheels 100 located near or at the intersection of the L-shape. The exterior framework 98 also includes a pair of rests 102 on the bottom of the framework 98 located towards the front side 36 of the body 22. The rests 102 compensate for the additional height of the wheels 100 and allow the organizer 20 to maintain a generally horizontal stable position.

30 The exterior framework 98 also includes a handle 104 forming the upper portion of the exterior framework 98. The handle 104 is telescopically expandable/retractable between retracted and extended positions and

automatically locks into position in the extended position. When the handle 104 is locked in the extended position, depressing a release button 106 at the top of the handle 104 frees the handle 104 to telescopically move towards the retracted position. The handle 104 also locks into position in an intermediate position between the extended and retracted positions. As the handle 104 moves from the extended position towards the retracted position, the handle 104 automatically locks into the intermediate position unless the user maintains the release button 106 in a depressed position, allowing the handle 104 to continue to telescopically retract towards the retracted position.

In an alternative embodiment, instead of having the interior framework 68, the organizer 20 include tracks (not shown) connected to the sidewalls 32, 34. The trays 26 may be connected to and run along the tracks. The trays 26 may be connected to each other so that pulling the topmost tray 26 upwards, causes the remaining trays 26 to also be pulled upwards along the tracks.

In another alternative embodiment, the trays 26 may slide outwards horizontally from the interior framework 68.

In yet another alternative embodiment, the trays 26 may be spring-loaded such that the trays 26 automatically move towards the expanded configuration from the collapsed configuration.

In a further alternative embodiment, the trays 26 may include a number of covered compartments or the tray 26 itself may be one large compartment with a lid to provide access to the contents therein.

In use, the user can fill the organizer 20 with a variety of objects such as construction paper, printer paper, tools, jewelry, personal documents, embellishments, ribbons, or any object that one normally thinks of as being storable in a drawer, chest, cabinet, closet or the like. One way the user can begin the process of filling the organizer is to open the top side 28 of the body 22 by opening the fastening means 52 (zippers are shown for purposes of illustration) on each side of the top side 28 that intersects with one of the sidewalls 32, 34. When each zipper 52 is opened, the top side 28 is pivoted by the user along the intersection 40 where the top side 28 meets

the back side 38 after the user pulls on the flap 64, releasing the fastening means 66 connecting the flap 64 of the top side 28 to the front side 36.

At this point, the user could lift the trays 26 by pulling the handles 94 on the top portion 86 but this would provide access to only the trays 26 that extend above the top of the body 22 in the expanded configuration. In order to access the bottom trays 26, the user must open the front side 36 of the body 22. The user then opens the fastening means 54 (zippers are shown for purposes of illustration) on each side of the front side 36 that intersects with one of the sidewalls 32, 34. When each zipper 54 is opened, the front side 36 is pivoted by the user along the intersection 42 where the front side 36 meets the bottom side 30.

The front side 36 may then pivotally fall outwards away from the body 22, but the supports 56 allow the front side 36 to move only the distance allowed by the adjustable length of the supports 56.

The user is then free to pull the handles 94 on the top portion 86 to move the trays 26 to the expanded configuration. The user then fills whatever number of trays 26 the user desires to fill with whatever objects the user desires to place in the trays. The trays 26 are generally in the form of an open receptacle with a generally flat bottom and a low rim 108 for holding, carrying, or exhibiting the articles contained therein. The bottom of each tray 26 includes a number of generally semi-circular grooves 110 traversing the tray 26 as well as an access hole 112 big enough to accommodate a user's fingers which allows the user to push up from below an object (e.g., a stack of paper) resting on the bottom of the tray.

The user can also fill the pockets 44 on the sidewalls 32, 34 if they so desire.

When the user is finished loading, unloading or accessing the contents of the trays 26, the user can press the release buttons 96 to move the trays 26 back towards the collapsed configuration. The user can then secure the top and front sides 28, 36 in their closed positions by re-securing the zippers 52, 54 and pressing the flap 64 against the front side 36 so that the flap 64 is secured to the front side 36 by the fastening means 66.

The user can then move the organizer 20 in the same manner that one would move conventional wheeled luggage: The user pulls the adjustable handle 104 to a desired position, tips the organizer 20 so that only the wheels 100 of the organizer 20 are in contact with the surface upon which the organizer 20 rests, and pulls the organizer 20 behind them as they move towards a desired destination.

The body 22 may be constructed of a fiber cloth material which may be constructed from various materials including, without limitation, natural fibers, artificial fibers (e.g., NYLON), plastic, leather or the like. One or more of the sides 28-38 may be constructed of the above materials and reinforced with an internal sheet that may be made from various materials including, without limitation, plastic, plywood, metal, wood or the like. The external and internal frameworks may be constructed from various materials including, without limitation, plastic, metal, wood or the like.

The above-described embodiments of the present invention are illustrative only and not limiting. It will thus be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications may be made without departing from this invention in its broader aspects. Therefore, the appended claims encompass all such changes and modifications as falling within the true spirit and scope of this invention.